

Role Play: Bridging Divides – A Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Lesson Flow

1. Warm-up (about 3 minutes)

Start with a short class prompt such as:

“We have seen that human rights questions can look different across cultures. What happens when people from different backgrounds have to discuss the same issue together?”

Briefly discuss challenges of intercultural communication, for example misunderstanding, different priorities, and different ideas of fairness.

2. Group Role Play (about 10–12 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups of 3–4 students. Each group receives one scenario linked to one or two SDGs and an intercultural human rights challenge.

Suggested roles:

- **two speakers** with different cultural or social perspectives,
- **one mediator / observer** who guides the conversation and keeps the focus on human rights,
- **optional:** one journalist / note-taker who records key points and asks follow-up questions.

Task:

Act out the scenario. Try to understand the different perspectives, identify the central human rights issue, and look for common ground or a fair solution. The mediator should help keep the discussion respectful and balanced.

3. Short Debrief (about 3–5 minutes)

Groups briefly report back: What was the conflict? What made the discussion difficult? Did the group find a possible solution?

Possible discussion questions:

- What made it hard to understand the other perspective?
- How did you try to build a bridge between the different viewpoints?
- What does this show about applying universal human rights in diverse contexts?
- How can communication skills support human rights work across cultures?

Activity Cards

Activity Card 1: Fair Work and Cultural Difference

A representative of a large fashion company speaks with a factory owner in a developing country. They disagree about fair wages and safe working conditions. The factory owner argues that local labor norms are different and that higher standards would hurt the business.

Roles:

Company Representative

Factory Owner

Mediator / NGO Observer

Your task:

Discuss the problem and try to find a solution that respects workers' rights and also considers economic realities.

Focus questions:

- What human rights issue is at the center?
- Which arguments does each side use?
- What could be a fair compromise?

Activity Card 2: Education and Cultural Sensitivity

Parents from a migrant family meet with a school principal in Germany. They want their child's background, language, and identity to be respected at school. The principal also wants to ensure academic success and integration.

Roles:

Parent

Principal

Intercultural Mediator / Social Worker

Your task:

Act out the conversation and look for a solution that supports both inclusion and educational opportunity.

Focus questions:

- What does culturally sensitive education mean here?
- Where do the perspectives differ?

- How can the child's rights be protected?

Activity Card 3: Tradition and Women's Participation

A community leader from a traditional society speaks with a UN human rights advocate about women's participation in local decision-making. The community leader emphasizes tradition, while the advocate stresses equality and representation.

Roles:

Community Leader

UN Human Rights Advocate

Independent Mediator / Expert

Your task:

Discuss whether tradition and gender equality can be brought into dialogue and propose one practical next step.

Focus questions:

- Where is the main tension?
- Which right is being discussed?
- How could respectful change begin?

Worksheet

Name: _____

Scenario: _____

Role: _____

1. The main conflict in our role play was:

2. One perspective I understood better after the activity:

3. A possible fair solution or next step:

4. Final thought:

Human rights across cultures require
